



# ***Bob Corker's Policy Points***

*Compiled by the Legislative Team of U.S. Senator Bob Corker*



## **IMPROVING HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA**

*Senator Bob Corker strongly believes that no issue requires an innovative cure more than our country's ailing health care system. Today, nearly 46 million Americans, including over 700,000 Tennesseans, lack adequate health insurance to protect themselves and their families. Senator Corker believes that all Americans deserve to have access to high-quality private health insurance coverage that is both affordable and transferrable between jobs.*

- ✓ **Transforming Health Care:** Senator Corker has joined Senate colleagues in authoring the Every American Insured Health Act, a bill to provide all individuals access to health insurance that is both affordable and portable, and deeply rooted in the private market. Senator Corker is also a cosponsor of a bipartisan proposal that provides Americans with tax incentives to purchase health insurance, encourages states to reform medical liability laws, and strengthens the focus on wellness and preventative care rather than insuring people only when they are sick. Senator Corker believes both of these proposals provide a great starting point for Congress to pass meaningful health care reform in the near future. Today, nearly 46 million Americans, including over 700,000 Tennesseans, lack adequate health insurance coverage.
- ✓ **Expanding Health Care Access:** Senator Corker secured additional federal funding for Tennessee hospitals in S. 2499 and H.R. 6331, two Medicare reform bills that were passed by the Senate. Key provisions included additional federal assistance to Tennessee's safety net hospitals that provide a disproportionate share of uncompensated care. Senator Corker also cosponsored an amendment that would expand access to obstetrics care in rural areas. In various states, including Tennessee, OB/GYNs are leaving their practices due to the extraordinarily high cost of medical malpractice insurance. More than 30 of Tennessee's 95 counties have inadequate access to obstetrical care and 19 counties have no obstetrical access at all. The amendment would place caps on noneconomic damages for OB/GYNs facing lawsuits in rural counties across the country and help to lower the cost of medical malpractice insurance.
- ✓ **Making Health Insurance More Affordable:** Senator Corker is a sponsor of a bill that will empower Americans to purchase affordable health insurance policies sold nationwide by using the Internet and other innovative means. Currently, individuals are forced to purchase only the health plans available in their state, even if a neighboring state has more affordable and flexible plans. The Health Care Choice Act, S. 2477, would remove this barrier and allow individuals and families who reside in one state to buy a more affordable health insurance plan sold in another state. This would allow consumers the opportunity to tailor their insurance benefits to their individual needs.
- ✓ **Ensuring Health Care for Children:** Senator Corker voted to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) because he feels it is a successful and meaningful program which provides over 6 million low-income children across America with health insurance. Tennessee's SCHIP program, CoverKids, currently insures over 28,000 children. An estimated 40,000 children are projected to be enrolled in the program. Senator Corker also supports broader health care reforms, such as his "Every American Insured Health Act," that provides a comprehensive solution to give all Americans access to health insurance.



5-28-08 Senator Corker speaks during a roundtable on health care reform at Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga- Photo Courtesy of Rick Owens Photography, Chattanooga

"We need to move beyond solutions that only nibble at the edges of a much larger crisis facing our country: the nearly 46 million Americans that lack basic health insurance. This Congress owes the American public our attention to a crisis that is affecting so many individuals and their families. I believe this is our moral obligation."

- U.S. Senator Bob Corker

- ✓ **Equality for Mental Health:** Senator Corker cosponsored S. 558, the Mental Health Parity Act, which successfully passed the Senate in September 2007. This bill addresses the necessity for mental health to be treated the same as any other medical need. This bill would require insurance policies to provide the same level of mental health benefits as all other medical needs covered. Over 300,000 Tennesseans, and millions more Americans nationwide, are affected by mental illness.
- ✓ **Strengthening the Healthcare Safety Net:** Senator Corker opposed a proposal that would have limited payments to Tennessee's safety net hospitals that provide a majority of care to low-income and uninsured populations. Senator Corker also supported a one-year moratorium on the proposal that successfully passed into law. If enacted, the proposal would have cost Tennessee's health centers an estimated \$1.3 billion over five years and caused 19 of them to operate at a loss.
- ✓ **Preserving Access for Seniors:** Senator Corker supported measures to preserve Medicare beneficiaries' access to inpatient rehabilitation hospitals by cosponsoring S. 543. This bill was successfully incorporated into S. 2499 that passed the Senate and has become law. This bill revises a regulation to ensure that Medicare patients who meet the need for intense rehabilitation, regardless of specific condition, are able to access care at such facilities instead of turning to alternative and less appropriate care settings. In Tennessee, there are 32 inpatient rehabilitation hospitals.
- ✓ **Support for Broad-Based Medical Research:** Senator Corker voted in favor of an amendment to the 2008 Senate Budget Resolution to increase funding at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by \$2.1 billion in the 2009 budget. He has also signed on to a letter sent to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education asking that this increased NIH funding not be stripped from the final budget during the appropriations process.
- ✓ **Support for Cancer Research:** Senator Corker signed a letter sent to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services asking for a 9.5% increase in funding for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in 2009. NCI grants fund cancer research and treatment at designated cancer centers around the country. Tennessee cancer centers, including St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, received nearly \$100 million in NCI grant funding in 2007.
- ✓ **Expanding Suicide Prevention:** Senator Corker supported a measure to provide \$40 million in 2008 for suicide prevention services, awareness, research, and technical assistance. This funding request was passed by the Senate and has become law.
- ✓ **Working to End Polio:** Senator Corker supported funding for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Additional funding is intended to be used by the federal agencies to offer immunization support in both Asia and Africa where polio is still a threat. To date, tremendous progress has been made to eradicate polio and only four countries are known to have reported polio cases. This funding request was passed by the Senate and has become law. Senator Corker has also been honored by Rotary International as a 2008 "Champion of Polio Eradication Award" recipient.
- ✓ **Investing in Pediatric Health:** Senator Corker supported efforts to fully fund a program that ensures pediatric hospitals can continue to train new pediatric specialists. The program benefits several children's hospitals in Tennessee, including East Tennessee Children's Hospital and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This funding request was passed by the Senate and has become law.